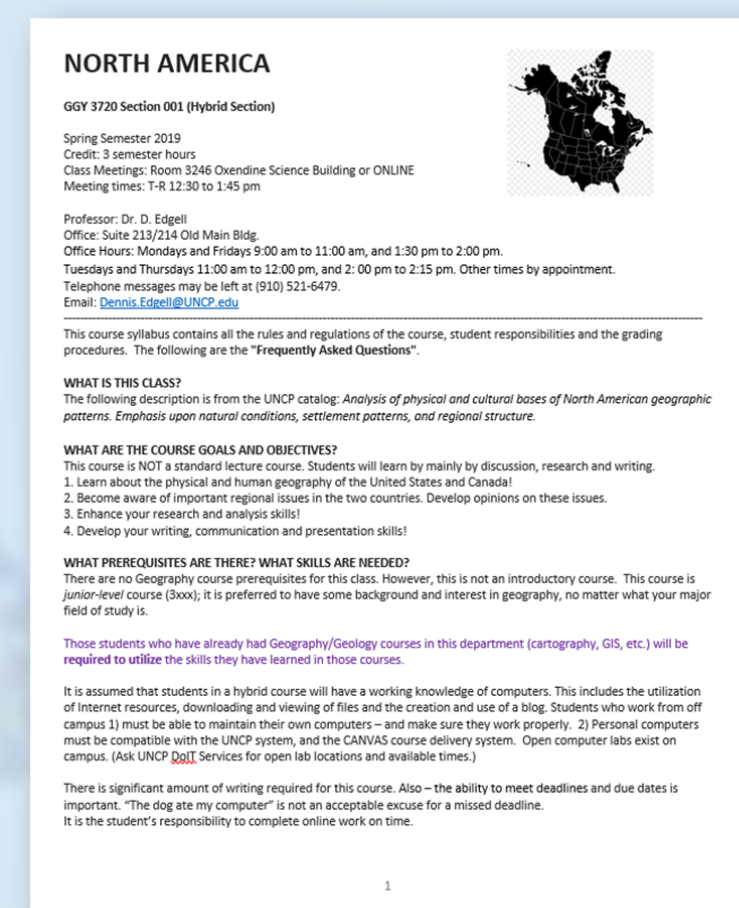


Blogging through the “GEOG-ing”

A Syllabus Transformation of GGY 3720: North America

Dr. Dennis J. Edgell
Geology and Geography Department



BACKGROUND:

It had been years since I taught the *Geography of North America* course. Usually only Geo-majors take the course as a requirement. I knew that the course would be low enrollment. Furthermore, I did not want to build another standard lecture course. (i.e. “Death by PowerPoint”).

I thought that students would learn better by *research and writing*, rather than listening to lectures and taking tests.

Each student created their own blog website. Students blogged anonymously, using a pen name known only to the other class members. They were to take on the persona of a professional writer. They were writing in the role of an expert or researcher -- not merely a student completing an assignment.

My hypothesis was that if students answered geography questions about North America from the perspective of a writer/blogger, they might connect with the material in a more personal and more permanent way.

Through writing and research on a specialized regional area, the student would become the expert. Hopefully this first-hand, depth of knowledge will live on with them after the course is concluded.

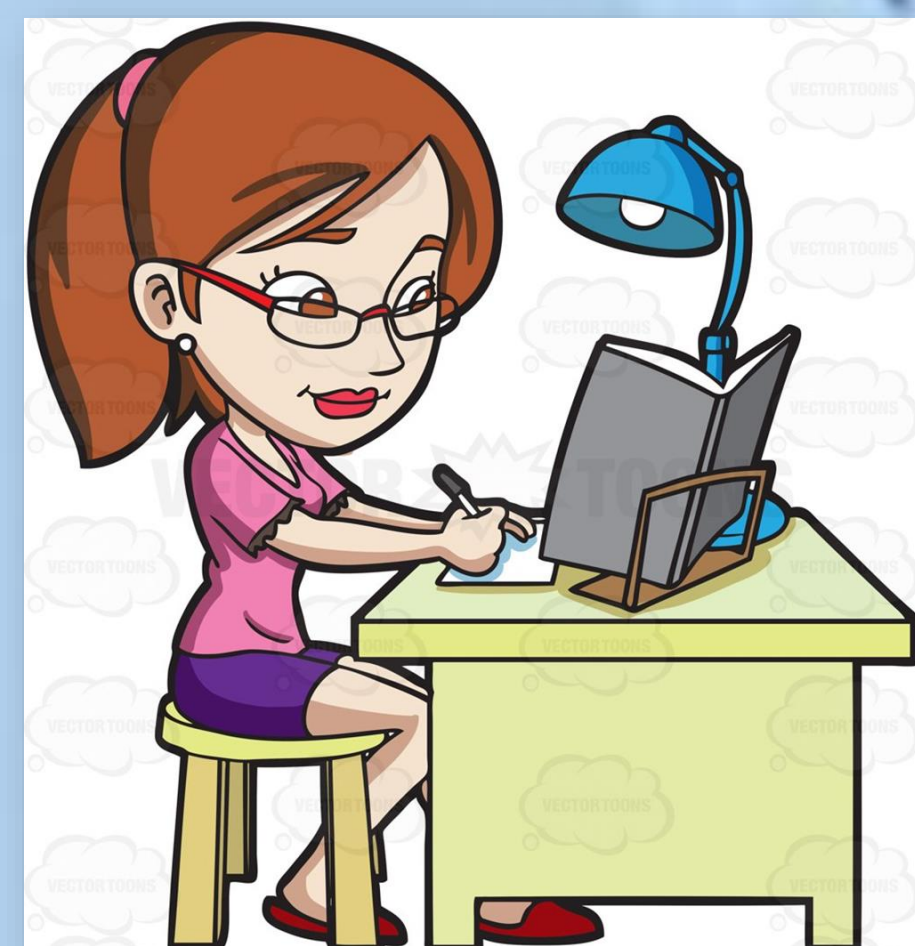
Students also learned by writing supporting comments and/or critiques on their classmates’ blog posts.

Each student also conducted a region-specific research project and wrote a Pembroke Undergraduate Research and Creativity (PURC) proposal for their topic.

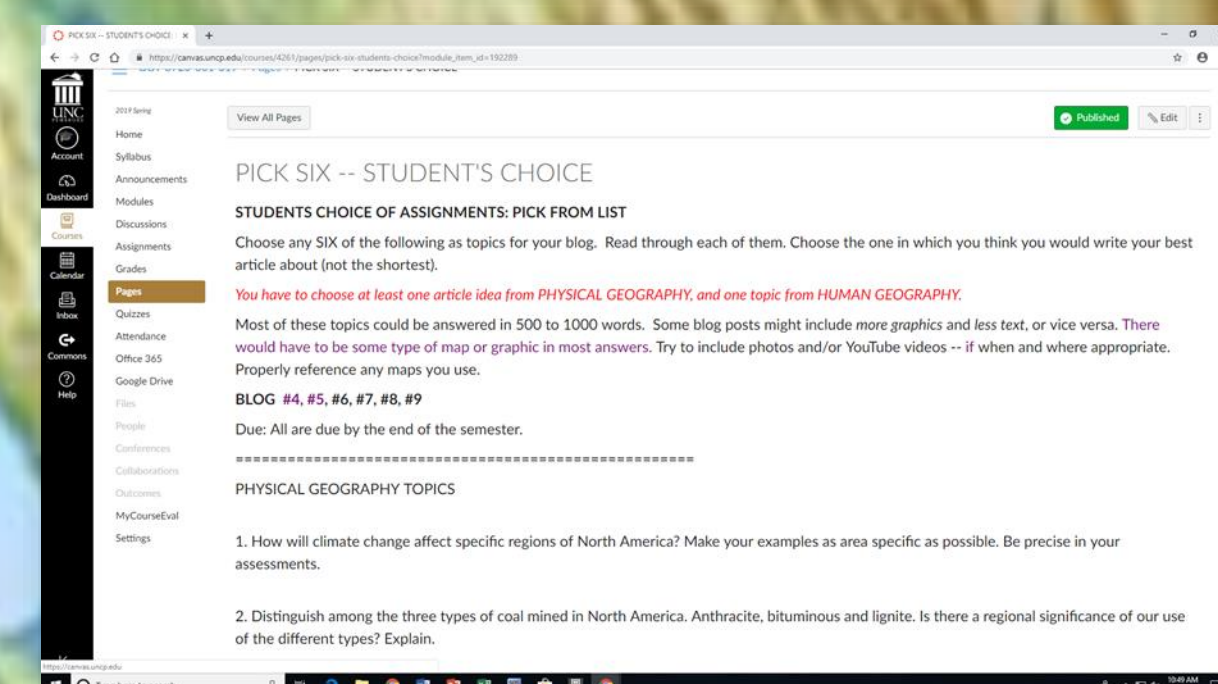
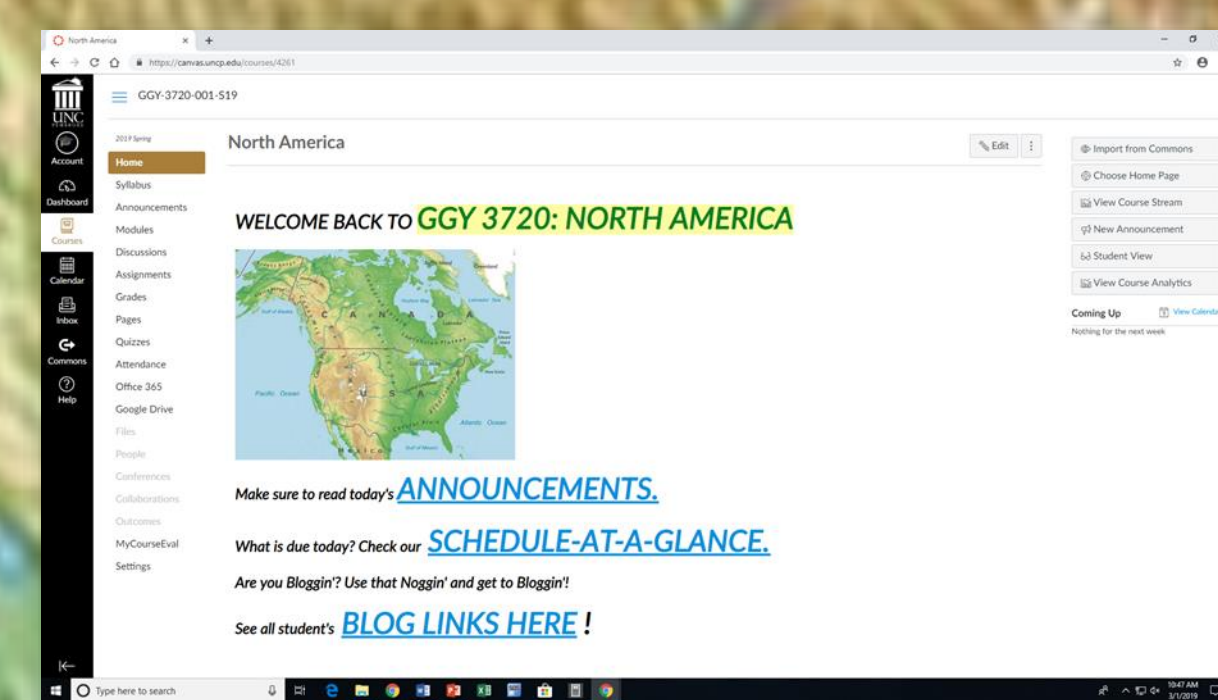
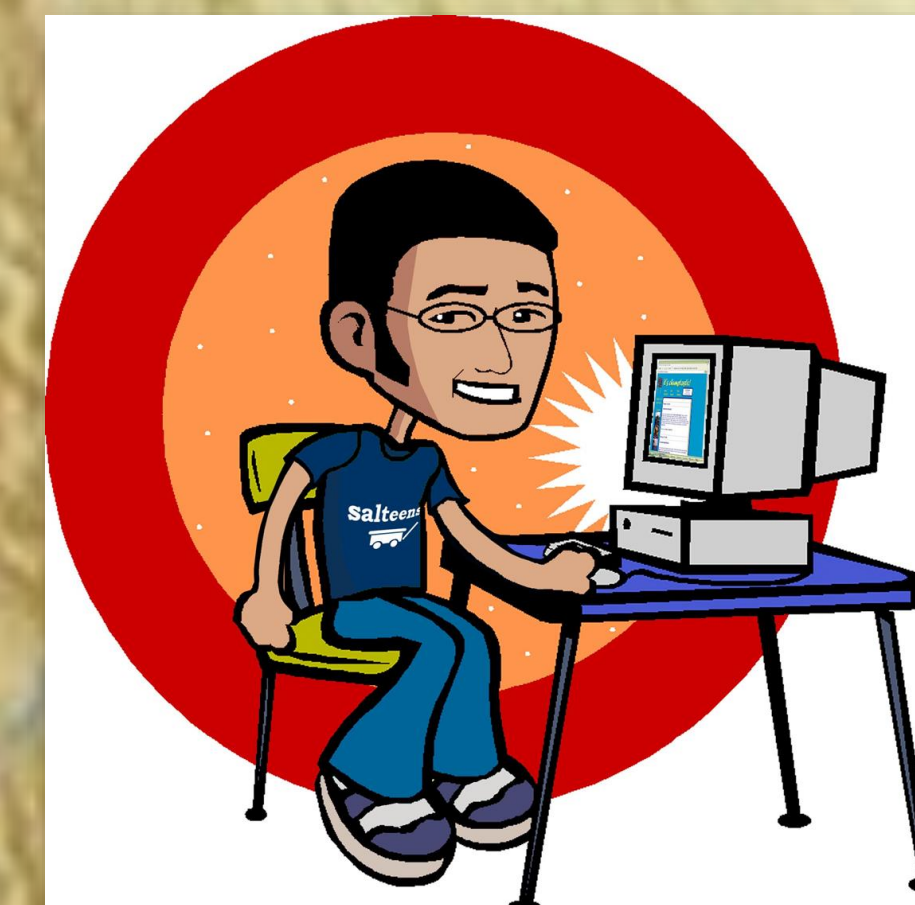
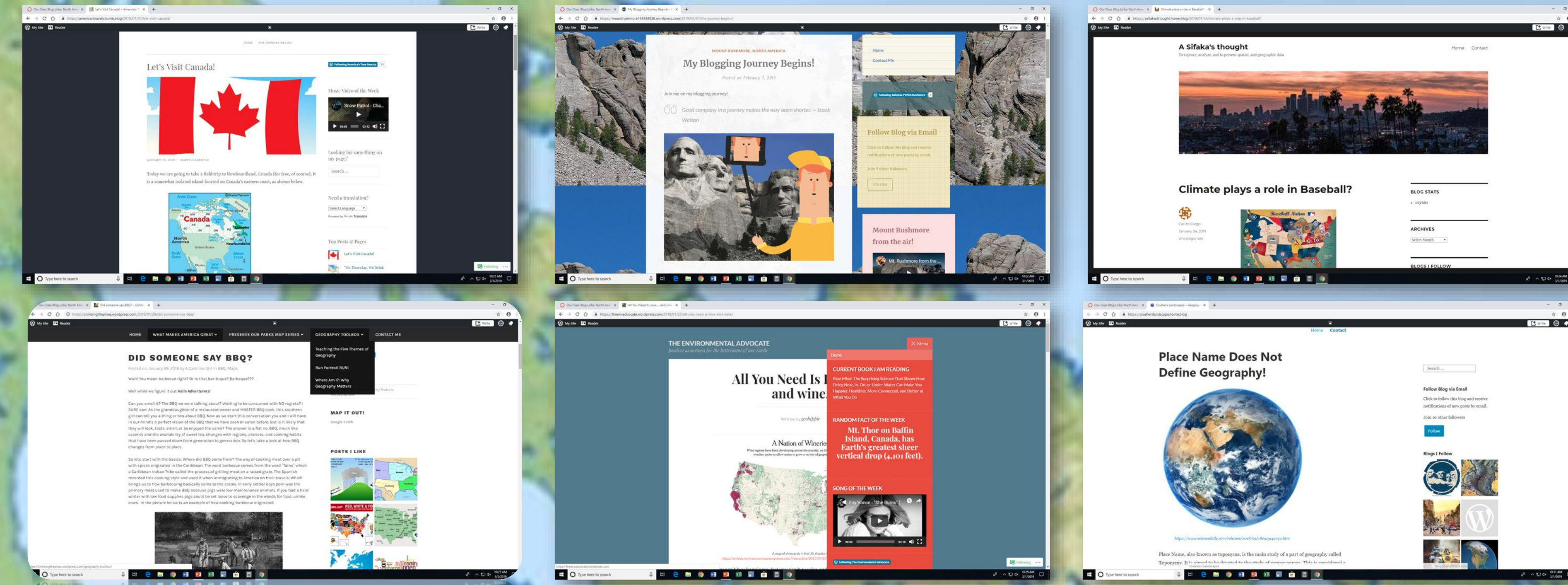
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Appreciation is given to the **UNCP Teaching and Learning Center** for financial support and scholarly encouragement.

If you want to visit any of the GGY 3720 blog websites – just scan the QR code below!



SAMPLE
SCREEN
SHOTS
➔



The course is only partially completed (as of March 1, 2019), but many blogging lessons have been learned:

- * Geography is not only about place-names!
- * Surprised student: **“You mean my writing is going to be exposed in public!?!?”**
- * The real world is complicated. Most textbooks only give generalizations. There are many detailed stories to learn when you zoom into areas.
- * Boromir’s Meme: *One does not simply “write” an article by cutting and pasting the text from Wikipedia!*
- * A “second pair of eyes” in draft mode is always needed before you publish a blog. There are always **tpyos**.

Positive aspects about the course format (from students at TLC Midterm “Check-In”):

- * The ability to make websites helps students self-learn.
- * The free range to learn and research what students want in all areas of US and Canada.
- * The instructors willing to meet and be involved with the students.
- * The encouragement, availability and communication of the instructor.
- * Explanation of assignments and meetings in cart lab to demonstrate doing things.
- * Flexible Deadlines for WordPress articles.

OUTCOMES:

1. Students own a commercial website! Technically, they are all now “professional writers”. They have the option of keeping their websites and even “monetizing” them on WordPress.com after the course is over. Along with other social media sites, they now have a professional website for their resumes and business cards. When asked “so what do you do?” at a professional or social meeting, they can now reply **“I’m a writer!”**

2. Students are also now real academic researchers and have published!

They have submitted abstracts for their North American research and writing. These are to be presented at UNCP PURC Symposium on April 10, 2019. This will be the first “public presentation” for nearly all students. Abstracts are published online by PURC. Students will also post further information on their blogs.

